STAR WARS™

DOCTOR APHRA

MARVEL

008

GILLEN
BROCCARDO
FABELA

THE SCREAMING CITADEL

Book I, Part V

It is a period of opportunity. In a galaxy oppressed by Imperial forces, there is little hope for the future. But for those operating on the fringes, there is potential for profit.

Rogue archaeologist Chelli Aphra is accompanied by young Rebel pilot, Luke Skywalker, to the Citadel of Ktath'atn – the Screaming Citadel – as they attempt to reactivate the Rur Crystal, an artifact with the consciousness of an ancient Jedi inside.

However, the Queen intends to capture them when she infects Han Solo with a symbiote, bringing him under the control of her hive mind. Princess Leia and Sana Starros attempt to launch a rescue mission, while Aphra decides to launch her own attack, beginning with infecting Luke with a symbiote as well....

KIERON GILLEN
Writer

ANDREA BROCCARDO
Artist

ANTONIO FABELA
Colors

MARCO CHECCHETTO
Cover Artist

VC's JOE CARAMAGNA
Letterer

HEATHER ANTOS
Assistant Editor

JORDAN D. WHITE
Editor

C.B. CEBULSKI
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For Lucasfilm:

Senior Editor FRANK PARISI

Creative Director MICHAEL SIGLAIN

Lucasfilm Story Group JAMES WAUGH, LELAND CHEE, MATT MARTIN

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The Screaming Citadel.

I AM KING.

YOU ARE MY QUEEN.

I AM NO ONE'S ANYTHING. EVERYONE HERE IS *MINE*.

I WILL NOT SURRENDER MY DOMINION TO ANYONE.

YOU NEED NOT *SURRENDER.*

YOU WILL *SUBMIT.*

OUR QUEEN... SHE IS ENTIRELY COMMITTED WITH ALL HER WILL.

SHE IS NO LONGER CONTROLLING HER SUBORDINATES... SO WE ARE THE MOST DOMINANT IN THE HIVE! WE ARE THE MASTERS!

ALL THE LOWER HIVE MEMBERS ARE OURS TO CONTROL...

WE TWO...AND *SOLO*.

QUICKLY.

YEAH, LEAVE THESE TWO IN A PSYCHIC HIGH-STAKES CARD GAME.

AND LET ME SLIP BLONDIE A WINNING HAND.

ENOUGH! IF THEY WON'T SERVE THE QUEEN WITH A PARASITE, THEY CAN SERVE AS FERTILIZER.

KILL THEM ALL! KILL THEM AL--

WAIT...I'M IN CHARGE. OF ME.

OF EVERYONE BENEATH ME. SO MANY LESSERS. I...

HAN! FIGHT IT!

EVERYONE... LOWER YOUR WEAPONS.

NO!

KILL HIM!

HE'S DISRUPTING THE HIVE!

ENOUGH LOWERING! GET SHOOTING!

AND YOU KNOW WHAT?

UNLEASH THE WOOKIEE!

HRRRRAUGH!

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YOU ARE MY HOST. OBEY. DO NOT RESIST! YOU ARE WEAKENING ME.

FIGHT ALONGSIDE ME, OR THE QUEEN WILL KILL US BOTH.

BUT... I DON'T KNOW.

THIS ISN'T RIGHT.

CORRECT, MORTAL.

WHO ARE YOU?

I AM ETERNAL RUR.

THE APHRA HUMAN HAD ME PROJECT INTO YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS.

I MUST ASSIST YOU IN THIS DUEL. YOU HAVE BEEN COMPROMISED BY AN ALIEN PARASITE.

YOU CAN MASTER IT AND USE IT AS A WEAPON.

I CAN EXPLAIN THE RELEVANT TECHNIQUES.

CONCENTRATE YOUR WILL HERE, HERE AND HERE...

I'LL TRY. AND THEN?

THEN YOU WILL CONTROL YOUR PARASITE. SLAY THE QUEEN AND THEN MOVE ON.

IT IS A POWERFUL WEAPON. A JEDI'S GIFTS MARRIED TO THE ALIEN EMOTIONAL DRIVE OF THE PARASITE? YOU WILL BE UNSTOPPABLE. THE EMOTIONAL EXTREMES ARE AN ACCEPTABLE PRICE FOR SUCH ABILITIES. I AM ***ENVIOUS***.

YOU'RE WRONG.

ARROGANT HUMAN! I AM WISDOM FROM BEYOND TIME! OBEY!

YOU'RE NOT A JEDI. YOU JUST KNOW WHAT A JEDI KNOWS.

THAT'S NOT ENOUGH. KNOWING ISN'T ENOUGH.

BEING A JEDI IS ABOUT ***BEING***.

LETTING GO...

HAH! EVEN WITH A JEDI'S FORCE YOU CANNOT DEFEAT ME, USURPER.

I...

WAIT. YOU SEPARATED YOURSELF FROM THE PARASITE. YOU ARE--

...FEELING...

...AND MORE THAN ANYTHING...

...THE JEDI FEEL FREE.

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THEY'RE OUTFIGHTING US. CAN YOU CONTROL MORE OF THE TROOPS?

HE CAN'T CONTROL HIMSELF. HOW CAN YOU EXPECT HIM TO--

HEY! THERE'S TWO OF THEM AND ONE OF ME! AND PARDON ME IF I'M A LITTLE INEXPERIENCED IN...WHATEVER THE HELL IS GOING ON!

WHAT HAPPENED?

LUKE. LUKE HAPPENED.

I JUST KNOW IT.

QUICKLY! TAKE OUT THE LEADERS!

GET THE LAST--

...ONE.

WAIT... I'M THE BOSS NOW!

THE KING!

HAIL THE KING!

WE OBEY!

OH, MAN. NOW THERE'S GOING TO BE CHANGES AROUND HERE. THE KINGDOM OF HAN? I LIKE THE SOUND OF--

HAN... THINK. WHAT DO YOU REALLY WANT?

TO DO MY OWN THING.

AND I'M FREE TO DO ANYTHING. I CAN...

WHEN YOU'RE KING? REALLY? THINK OF ALL THAT RESPONSIBILITY...

DO *YOU* WANT TO TELL PEOPLE WHAT TO DO?

HELL, NO!

OKAY, HOW DOES A GUY DISBAND AN ALIEN HIVE? ER...

HOW ABOUT...

ALL OF YOU SHALL... QUIT THESE PEOPLE! NOW! I ORDER IT SO!

SOUND GOOD?

FREE!

FREE!

OH, GREAT. HAN SOLO, THE GREAT EMANCIPATING MESSIAH.

HOW ARE WE GOING TO LIVE WITH *THIS?*

NOW, GET ME TO THE *FALCON.*

I CAN DO THE KESSEL RUN IN ELEVEN PARSECS! MAYBE EVEN TEN POINT EIGHT! I KNOW IT!

OKAY. ***NOW*** HE'S LOSING IT.

SEDATE HIM! QUICKLY!

I THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER ASK.

IS HE OKAY?

I'M SORRY. THIS IS MY FAULT.

I--

SHUT UP.

AH. WHAT A HAPPY REUNION SCENE. TOUCHING.

ANYTHING ACTUALLY USEFUL THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

TRIPLE-ZERO--GET THE PARASITE OUT OF HAN. QUICKLY.

MORE IMPORTANTLY? BEETEE...

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"...BURN EVERYTHING."

BLEEP!

WAS THAT NECESSARY?

YES. PURGING IS THE ONLY ANSWER. WE SHOULD CONTACT THE IMPERIALS WHEN WE'RE GONE.

THE PARASITES ARE ONE THING THEY TAKE SERIOUSLY. WE HAVE TO BE SURE.

GET THAT METAL MONSTER AWAY FROM ME!

HAN! YOU'RE OKAY!

NO, I'M *NOT* OKAY! THAT THING DRILLED INTO MY HEAD!

AH--I CAN SEE THE PROBLEM. OUR FASTEST ACTING NEUROTOXIN IS MERELY A *PARALYZING* AGENT.

IF YOU WANTED A PAINKILLER, YOU REALLY SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE SPECIFIC.

IT'S NOT MY FAULT IF YOU'RE SLOPPY, PRINCESS LEIA.

I'M JUST GLAD YOU'RE IN ONE PIECE, HAN.

HEY, IT'S ON ME. THOUGHT IT WAS A BUNCH OF MUMBO JUMBO, BUT TURNS OUT...WELL, IT'S NOT...

THIS ONE TIME, ANYWAY. MAYBE I WAS A *LITTLE* OVERCONFIDENT...

SHUSH. IT'S OKAY.

YOU'RE YOU.

WHAT'S *WRONG* WITH YOU, PRINCESS?

JUST A MOMENT OF BEING GRATEFUL FOR YOU GUYS.

WELL, I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE OTHERS, BUT *THIS* GUY COULD GET USED TO IT.

DON'T WORRY, IT WON'T LAST.

HEY, APHRA.

OKAY. THIS IS MY PIECE. FIRSTLY--

NO. NOT NOW. YOU LEFT, BUT YOU CAME BACK.

THAT'S AS GOOD AS ANYONE CAN EXPECT FROM YOU.

I WASN'T GOING TO COME BACK.

BUT YOU DID.

WHERE DID IT GO WRONG WITH US?

WE MET.

SANA. WE'VE GOT TO GO.

GOOD LUCK.

LUKE, THIS...THIS WENT BAD. BUT I HAVE AN ACTIVATED CRYSTAL HERE.

I CAN GIVE YOU SOME ACCESS AND--

FORGET IT.

IT'S NOT A JEDI.

NOT IN ANY WAY THAT MATTERS.

THERE ARE NO JEDI, NOT ANYMORE. NOTHING IS GOING TO BE EASY.

WHICH IS FINE, AS NOTHING WORTHWHILE IS EASY.

I'M...I'M SORRY YOU DIDN'T LEARN ANYTHING.

YOU DON'T GET IT. EVERYTHING I SAID? THAT WAS LEARNING SOMETHING. THAT WAS GOOD TO KNOW.

BECAUSE PEOPLE WHO THINK THERE'S A SHORTCUT TO GETTING WHAT THEY WANT?

THEY'RE NOT JUST WRONG.

THEY'RE DELUDED.

NOW STAY THE HELL AWAY FROM ME AND MY FRIENDS.

JUDGMENTAL PIECE OF BLOND TATOOINE BANTHA DUNG.

HE ANNOYS ME *SO MUCH.*

I CAN IMAGINE.

HE WENT THROUGH AN EXPERIENCE JUST AS TRAUMATIC AS YOURS AND REMAINS A POSITIVE, DELIGHTFUL PERSON, DEVOTED TO A BETTER EXISTENCE FOR ALL SENTIENT LIFE.

AND YOU REALIZE HOW SPECIAL HE IS TOO LATE TO RETAIN HIS RESPECT!

THAT MUST BE AN AWFUL REMINDER OF YOUR OWN FAILINGS OF CHARACTER.

TO BE HONEST, MASTER, I'M NOT SURE IF I'D BE ABLE TO LIVE WITH MYSELF.

TAKE THE CONTROLS, KRRSANTAN.

BLEEP!

I DON'T KNOW!

IT MUST HAVE BEEN SOMETHING I SAID.

AND ON TOP OF EVERYTHING ELSE, HER DROIDS LOBOTOMIZED ESSFOR?!

I DON'T GET IT, SANA...

...HOW COULD YOU HAVE EVER BEEN WITH HER?

YOU KNOW, LUKE?

I'VE NEVER FOUND A GOOD ANSWER TO THAT.

HEY, DON'T MAKE IT ABOUT HER AND HER FREAKSHOW.

WE SAVED THE DAY. *WE* FREED PEOPLE. *WE'RE* TOGETHER.

THAT'S SOMETHING. THAT'S EVERYTHING.

NOW YOU'RE TALKING!

DO I GET ANOTHER MEDAL?

IT DOESN'T FEEL QUITE RIGHT UNLESS I WALK AWAY WITH A SOUVENIR...

WE *CAN* LEAVE. WE *SHOULD* LEAVE. QUICKLY!

DON'T BE A FOOL.

WE'LL LEAVE... BUT HOW MANY GENERATIONS TOILED FOR HER, BLED FOR HER, WERE HER CATTLE?

WE'RE STARTING A NEW LIFE. WE NEED SOMETHING TO PAY FOR IT.

THE PLACE COLLAPSED AS IT BURNED. THERE MUST BE SOMETHING BURIED WE CAN SELL.

HMM?

SOMETHING BURIED HERE. JUST GET IT CLEAR AND--

KKKKKKKKKK!

SKYWALKER.

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOUR FACE?

I MADE AN ERROR OF JUDGMENT...

...AND YOU'RE RIGHT. WE NEED TO LEAVE, QUICKLY.

OUR FUTURE IS ELSEWHERE.

DOCTOR APHRA

NEXT ISSUE:

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away is a lot easier to get to than you think – and we want to hear from you! Write us at StarWars@Marvel.com if you want to make it onto a future letters page. Don't forget to mark the letter "OK TO PRINT."

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RELEASE - DCP